

[Elizabeth Roe]

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Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7

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Elizabeth Roe, 83, living at Azle, Tex., was born at Ash Creek settlement, three miles west of Azle, Jan. 6, 1855. Her father, William Fletcher, owned a tract of land located near Ash Creek and engaged in farming for a livelihood. He enlisted in the Confederate Army when the Civil War commenced, and died from illness while serving in Virginia. Elizabeth's mother continued farming, with the assistance of her young children, and reared her family. They were compelled to contend with the Indians depredations, and had their stock stolen several times by Indian raiders. She married Montgomery Roe in 1873, who was a Texas Ranger serving under Captain Willis Hunter, with headquarters located on Salt Creek. She has lived in the vicinity during her entire life. She now lives within three miles of where she was born. Her story:

"I was born within three miles of where I am now living, on the 6th day of January, 1855.

"My father, William Fletcher, owned a small tract of land located on Ash Creek. There was a settlement there called the Ask Creek Settlement. This little village of Azle did not exist at the time I was born, but was a part of the Ash Creek settlement. Even when I was old

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enough to note events, I do not remember of hearing about Fort Worth, until a number of years later. Weatherford was the main trading point for us Ash Creek settlers, and where we obtained our mail.

“A trip to Weatherford was an eventful occasion, and usually made on horseback. During my girlhood days I never saw a buggy. If we desired to go somewhere, we either walked or rode a horse. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 If there was a number of people going somewhere together, they would either be mounted on a horse or all ride in a farm wagon pulled by oxen or a team of mules.

“My home was a one-room log cabin, similar to the homes of all other settlers. The settlers in the Ash Creek district built their homes from logs. The only difference in these structures was the number of rooms each contained. Some of the cabins contained two rooms. These cabins were all built by hand. The lumber was hand made and, by hand, worked into doors, window frames and flooring.

“Our living was obtained from the patch of ground which we cultivated and planted to food stuff and cotton. Also, from cattle which ranged in the territory and wild game that abounded in the woods.

“My father enlisted in the Confederate Army when the Civil War started, and became ill and died while serving in Virginia. This event left mother alone to rear her children. My mother and us children attended to the farm work. I was the oldest, with a brother a year younger and a baby brother constituted the family of children. While we worked hard and had many difficulties to contend with, we always had sufficient food and an ample supply of clothing.

“We raised a little wheat and corn. From these grains we secured our flour and corn meal. We paid out no money for grinding our grain. A portion was taken by the miller in payment for his grinding charge. We had a vegetable garden, had a few chickens, and a couple of milk cows which were pastured for our butter and milk supply. The material for our clothing

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was raised by us, and from this material we made the cloth and the clothes. The material 3 was cotton and wool from the sheep we raised.

“As a child, with my brothers, I spent many nights helping mother pick cotton seeds, carding cotton, wool, and assisting her to spin the material. The weaving of the materials into thread with the spinning wheel was the next process after carding, and the old spinning wheel could be heard many nights into the late hours. After spinning came the weaving process on the hand loom, then the dyeing process. The dyes were made from bark and other vegetable matter.

“When we completed a suit or dress and succeeded in producing a nice color shade, we were mighty proud of our garments.

“The clothes we made and sat up nights to produce by a tedious hand method gave me more satisfaction than any factory produced garment I have ever worn. Well might we be proud of our garments those days, because our very soul was put into the making of our clothes. Many, many, nights my mother and the children sat working at the loom or spinning wheel till our eyelids would refuse to remain open, and we would be forced to quit work.

“Our patch of cultivated ground was fenced with a split rail fence. This was necessary to prevent cattle from molesting our crop. Also, to keep out deer and other wild animals, which would destroy the grain.

“We raised a few cattle, which ran in the creek bottoms. We followed the custom of the day and branded our stock and let the animals find their own living.

“A short distance from our settlement was located the section where folks depended on only cattle for a living. I recall some 4 of the large cowcamps of those days. There were the McLean, Watson, Bill Smith and John Collins camps in the surrounding territory.

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"From our cattle we secured our beef, and sold a few head for money that was necessary for the few articles we had to buy. Also we had a herd of hogs, which found their own living, with the exception of a small amount of corn which we fed for the purpose of keeping the animals close to our farm. This herd of hogs supplied our hog meat and lard.

"Besides the domestic animals, the woods were full of various kinds of game, such as deer, wild turkey, partridge, and many other edible wild animals. Because of this supply of domestic and wild animal meat, we were able to pick our choice of preferred cuts. In addition, besides our own cattle, there were hundreds of other cattle in the bottoms, which, drifted in from the cattle ranches. In those days it was not considered wrong to take a yearling for meat supply, even if its brand was that of someone else.

"In the Ask Creek settlement, there were no real cowcamps; but the settlement was surrounded with cattle ranches, and many of the settlers, especially the young men, worked more or less as cowhands on the adjacent range.

"Our most feared trouble was the Indians. They were a constant menace. In the vicinity of the Ash Creek settlement there were frequent Indian raids, and a number of settlers were killed during my childhood days. Also, a number of women and children were kidnapped. 5 "My mother's home was raided several times, but the good Lord was with us.. We were never injured, but did lose horses and food.

"I recall one night when mother was away at our neighbor, Bedwell's, place, where there was sickness at the time. Brother and I were sitting up waiting for mother to return home. Suddenly, we heard a noise similar to an owl's screech. Brother said:

"'Listen to the owls screeching'.

"'It sounds like owls, but it is not,' I replied.

"'Its Indians, I bet', he suggested. 'Let's hide'.

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"From the time we were old enough to have any understanding of the meaning of words, mother had dinned in our ears to evade Indians, and when old enough to handle a gun she taught us to shoot.. We had two hiding places: One in the loft of the cabin and one in a hole under a rock located in a brush patch near the cabin.

"When in heard the owl's screech, we blew out the candle and crawled to the hole under the rock. We were not there long when Indians appeared, mounted on ponies, and rode up to the house. They scrutinized the place, then went to the corral and took two of our most valuable horses.

"Indian scares would happen frequently, because of reports that Indians were seen in the surrounding territory. On these occasions everyone would live in fear until word was received that the Indians had moved on. Frequently, we have remained in the woods hiding for two or three days at a time, when word was passed around that Indians were depredating somewhere in the 6 surrounding country. During my childhood days, we lived more or less in constant fear of Indian raids.

"While we Fletchers were not kidnapped by the Indians, there were several people in the Vicinity which were carried off and some killed by the Indians. Among those to meet with this misfortune were the Davis and the Hamilton families.

"The Davis family lived on Walnut Creek. The members of this family were killed and carried off. I don't recall of hearing that any of the Davis folks were ever heard of after the raid. The Hamilton family, which also lived on Walnut Creek, were raided. The parents were killed and two children were carried off. One child was sick at the time, and after it was carried for some distance the Indians rolled the child in a blanket and layed it on the ground in some brush. The child, of course cried. After riding for a distance away from the child, the Indians returned and killed it. It was supposed they feared the cry would attract attention.

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"One of the Hamilton [boys?] was away from home at the time of the raid. He set out to find and retake his sisters. It was about a year later when he located a sister. He traded for the child and then learned about the killing of the other child.

"The conditions which I have related were what we lived under until I reached womanhood.

"I married Montgomery Roe in 1873, and a short time after we were married he enlisted in the Texas Rangers and served under Captain Willis Hunter. The company's headquarters were at Silver Creek. 7 "After my husband enlisted, I again lived in fear. I knew the danger his work insured. The rangers had to contend with cattle rustlers, fights between cattlemen and between ranchers and sheep men, and with desperadoes.

"Those days the Rangers were called upon to do considerable burying. When some person's body was found, who had been shot or hanged, the Rangers were generally notified and they buried the body.

"I saw my husband and a couple of fellow Rangers bury the Cantrell women, who were sometimes called by the name of Hill.

"The Cantrell women were the leaders of a gang of cattle rustlers, and the rumor was that they were among the most troublesome rustlers in the State.. The folks interested in the cattle business decided to stop these two women and hanged them to a tree near Springtown.

"The Rangers would generally receive word that somebody discovered a person hanging to a limb of a tree or one that had been shot. As a rule the report would be received a day or two after the incident happened. However, in the case of the Cantrell women the report did not reach the Rangers until a couple of weeks or more after the hanging. When my husband's party went to get the bodies; they found the bodies on the ground, but their

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heads were still held by the noose of the rope. These bodies had remained until decay had caused the bodies to separate from the heads.

“The Cantrell women were buried in a cemetery at Springtown. The graves were under a tree, and the Rangers tied the rope, with which the women were hanged, to a limb over the graves, as a marker for a rustler's grave. 8 “My husband was mustered out of the Ranger service in 1875. We then made our livelihood by farming in the Ash Creek vicinity, and near what is now called Azle, Tex.

“The village of Azle did not get started until I was a young woman. I do not recall the year, but it was during the Civil War, as I recall about the close of the conflict.

“The village received its start when Dr. Stewart located here with his family. He attended the sick in this section and operated a farm, which was located at the east edge of the present village. He died here about 30 year ago.

“After Dr. Stewart located in the community, a man named Moore opened a store. He put in a small stock of goods and conducted his business in a little log cabin. Later, Joe Fowler bought Moore's store. Fowler enlarged the business. Then, the next step towards a village was the location of a postoffice here, which was operated in connection with the store. Finally, a blacksmith shop was started, then another store. This amount of business remained the business section of Azle for a number of years. After the automobile became in general use, gas stations, garages, and sandwich shops opened up.

“This settlement, except for Azle, has not changed much since I was a young woman. Of course, there is more land under cultivation, and the houses are now frame structures.